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AUTHOR Lanford, Horace
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ABSTRACT

A motivational approach to student learning that has been implemented in several courses at Wright University in Ohio consists of six efforts: (1) to instill in students the knowledge of motivation, both from within and without; (2) to make students members of cohesive work groups; (3) to apply theory learned; (4) to demonstrate achievement of objectives, require students to "stretch" to achieve objectives; (5) to teach students how to study; and (6) to make the learning experience fun. The tone, style, direction and atmosphere to be carried through the entire course are established the first day of class, and opportunities are provided for students to perform many exercises to help develop individual ability at self-motivation and to develop the ability to motivate others, primarily through group discussions and study sessions. During the first two class meetings, students are divided into groups, personal objectives are set, and motivational films are shown. Grades in the course are given for mid-term and final exams, a research project, and an oral presentation. Effective class exercises include demonstrations to encourage use of creativity, strategic thinking, and management decision. Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis is used to assess the amount of resistance to change. The use of this motivational technique has resulted in the elimination of very low grades and achievement levels ranging from 70% to 96% of the students in a class making grades of 90 or better on the final exam. (DJR)

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A Motivational Approach to Student Learning: The Lanford Technique

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Horace Lanford

Wright State University

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The author's first effort at motivating students to improve their learning and resultant grades was geared to a large number of grades, fourteen to eighteen grades per quarter, to provide a rapid feedback to students so that they understood quickly the instructor's perception of their work. These efforts began in the early 1970's. A colloquium on the subject of motivational grading was given the faculty of the College of Business and Administration, Wright State University, in February 1973. An instructor from another department thought sufficiently strong about the concept to engage, with the author, in a controlled experiment using the motivational approach. The experiment was a success and the results published in 1974.[1]

Under department pressure to reduce the number of "high grades" to students, the author reverted to two grades per quarter, the mid-term examination and the final examination. As is to be expected the student grades dropped, about eighteen to twenty-five percent of students made the grade of ninety or better on the mid-term examination and about nine to eighteen percent made the grade of ninety or better on the final examination.

These disturbing facts led the author to seek another motivational approach. Early efforts saw the author setting an objective of fifty percent of the class to make the grade of ninety or better on the final examination. The early efforts produced results of seventeen percent achieving the objectives the first quarter tried, then twenty-four percent the next quarter tried, then forty-one percent, then forty-six percent. At this point in time

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a student suggested that students be allowed to participate in setting the percentage objective. Under this new scheme the achievement percentages rose steadily, to sixty-six percent, to seventy-seven percent, eighty-two percent and eight-four percent. The best achievement so far is that of two sections in the Summer of 1984, one section achieving ninety-one percent and the second section achieving ninety-six percent of the class sections making ninety or better on the final examination.

This progress was so satisfying to the author that the decision was made to apply the concept to mid-term examinations also. Training films dealing with motivation were incorporated in the courses in the early meetings of the courses. Although the percent of the classes achieving the grade of ninety or better on mid-term examinations is not as great as on the final examinations, the results are nevertheless excellent. The very low grades of twenty and thirty, out of a possible one hundred, have been eliminated. The author has encountered only two of such low scores since utilizing this technique.

Course Plan

The course plan is relatively simple and consists of six efforts:

1. Instill in students the knowledge of motivation, both from within and without.
2. Make students members of cohesive work groups.
3. Apply theory learned.
4. Demonstrate achievement of objectives, require students to "stretch" to achieve objectives.
5. Teach students how to study.
6. Make the learning experience fun.

Implementation

The instructor keeps before him, to review before the first class period

and all other class periods, the advice that students' first impressions count inordinately.[2] The tone, the style, the direction, and the atmosphere established on the first day carry through the entire course. It is strongly recommended that the opening lecture or discussion be devoid of parent messages.

There are some excellent training films on motivation available. Batten's film, "Keep Reaching The Power of High Expectations", is highly recommended.[3] Batten holds that motivation comes from within the individual. Another excellent training film expresses the philosophy of ex-coach George Allen.[4] Allen's football players gave Allen credit for being a highly skilled communicator and for being very very good at motivating his players. This author attempts to create an environment where the student is motivated both from within and without. The students are given the opportunity to perform many exercises to help develop students' ability at self-motivation and to develop the ability to motivate others.

In the first class meeting, students are asked to divide themselves into small groups of five or six individuals. The author has experimented with many ways of group formation and with waiting various periods for group formation. No advantage in waiting until later class periods for group formation has been found. After the groups are formed, each group member is asked to tell all other members of the group two or five facts about himself or herself.[5] After a sufficient introductory period, the group members are asked to list the objectives of the group (members) for the course. After listing course objectives each group is asked to select a leader. After selection, the group leader's first task is to report his or her group's objectives to the class as a whole. The constituency of each group and the group leader appear to have a significant effect on the group's effectiveness,

including the participation of group members (including attendance), the degree of cohesiveness, the pride in achievement, and the overall productivity of the group. A small number of groups encountered have been characterized by little participation (including poor class attendance), no class preparation, and course drops.

The small groups perform numerous exercises throughout the course, exercises in charting communication patterns, in identifying group norms and standards of performance expected of all group members, of performing performance evaluations on all other members of the group including a self-evaluation, of performing case analyses of text cases and the force field analysis exercise conducted before examinations.

The students apply theory, particularly through the force field analysis, and also through self-motivation, the motivation of others, the identification of measurable objectives, the achievement of some short range objectives such as grade improvement, the application of transactional analysis theory in courses following the principles course, the opportunity to develop performance standards and use the standards, an in applying their knowledge of group communication patterns. Styles of leadership are sometimes assigned to group leaders by the author to acquaint both leaders and group members with various styles. The small groups develop group objectives for the course and the individual students develop their short range and long range objectives. The group objectives may be reviewed during the course to determine achievement or progress.

In group study sessions, the students with grade point averages of three point five or four point have the opportunity to show students having a grade point average of one point eight or two point three <u>how</u> to study. The author finds group study sessions for undergraduate students to be very effective.

The author enjoys (has fun) in the undergraduate classes in which this technique is used. It appears the students enjoy the classes also. This enjoyment is evidenced by the animated (sometimes noisy) discussions in the small groups, by the frequent peals of laughter in group exercises, by the desire (frequently) to have some type of out-of-class meetings for beer or for a party, and by the formation of long-term friendships among the students. Some of the groups formed in the first course appear intact in the second course. Many of the groups remain basically intact throughout the junior and senior years. The author is convinced the students have fun using this technique.

No small group meeting rooms are available to the author. The group meetings are conducted in the large classroom. If chairs can be "circled", they are. If permanent rows of seats are in place, the student adapt themselves by sitting on two rows, the front-most row facing rearward, and other adaptive methods.

First Class Meeting

The first two class meetings are very important. In the first class meeting, after roll call with a show of hands to help the instructor learn to put names with faces, the students are asked to form groups of five students per group. Of course, the groups come out with four to seven members per group but the instructor makes no change. The formation of the groups has been described earlier. This author numbers the various groups. The numbers are assigned by the instructor in the order that the groups complete their organizational process. The group leaders are asked to show hands when their group has completed introductions, determined group objectives, selected the leader, and show hands. First to complete the process is designated number one, and so on. A numbering system from left to right is just as good in

fact, will save many steps on the part of the instructor when collecting papers from groups in group order.

When the groups report their objectives, the instructor may comment upon the objectives if so inclined. Some objectives listed will be easily attained, some attained with "stretching", and occasionally, an objective is listed that is outside the scope of the given course.

After reviewing the class objectives for the course, the attention of the class is invited to the training film, "Keep Reaching: The Power of High Expectations" (previously referenced). This film by Batten discusses motivation from <u>within</u>, and relates events in a business organization and in the home life of an aspiring but as yet unsuccessful manager. Of course, all works out well, each of the aspiring manager's sons are motivated to achieve each's objective, and the father gets his desired promotion - <u>after</u> developing the ability to set the stage for subordinates to motivate themselves. Some very useful instructor notes come with the training film, including a questionnaire to help each participant assess his or her strengths or weaknesses in motivating both self and others. Apparent weaknesses should then become the targets for improvement. Batten's "Circle of Motivation" is a very good learning device. Other suggested exercises include the opportunity for each participant to list his or her strengths and weaknesses and asks the participant for ways to improve perceived weaknesses. An excellent suggested exercise is for each participant to write a relatively short paper on the subject, "This is the person I think I am". This paper by each student, together with the later paper on personal objectives of each student, gives the instructor an excellent insight into the achievements and objectives of each student. The present author bemoans the fact that he does not have a photographic memory and the ability to recall the image of each student as

these papers are read! The exercises do develop a feeling of empathy and caring on the part of the instructor. But then, the Batten film, "Keep Reaching....." emphasizes the necessity of caring enough about others to encourage their best performance. Here is an example where an individual (the present author) learns enough about theory to try it!

The course syllabus is distributed at the end of the first class meeting. The syllabus contains "parent" messages which should be avoided in the first meeting.

Grading Scheme

The grading scheme is very simple. Essay-type mid-term and final examinations are given, based on material covered in the text(s), from training films, from cases, from exercises, or from material reported on in class, as well as material covered by the instructor. Students are provided the opportunity to do a research project on a subject relevant to the course for an additional grade. Still another grade opportunity is provided for an oral presentation to the class based on the research paper. The paper and oral presentation are directed at the achievement of a department objective--the improvement of communication skills in our students. The essay type examinations also provide opportunity for development of communication skills.

The instructor's expectations for students is included in the course syllabus. These expectations include:

a) Read assigned material

b) Outline assigned material

c) Study assigned material

d) Answer review questions and case questions

e) Achieve chapter objectives

The expectations are rigorous. Unlisted expectations include this same

type of familiarity with training films viewed, cases analyzed, and exercises performed in class.

The Second Class Meeting

The training film, "The Future Is Now," setting forth George Allen's management philosophy, has been previously referenced. This training film has been widely used in management seminars and professional meetings. It is an exciting film to watch and contains a great many worthwhile components of Allen's philosophy. A recommendation is made that each instructor using the film outline each part of Allen's philosophy to review at the end of the film. The use of this film, together with emphasis on personal objectives and planning, and the use of the film, "Keep Reaching," set the stage for students to want to do well. The force field exercise to be discussed demonstrates what can be done to achieve grade objectives.

Students are asked to write a personal objectives paper covering these time periods:

a. This course

b) This quarter

c) This year

d) Upon completion of college degree

e) At end of five years

f) At end of ten years

g) At end of twenty five years

Students are asked to identify what additional education, training, and work experience will be required to achieve objectives in each time frame and, very importantly, how is this additional education, training, and work experience to be achieved?

Many students have not been afforded the opportunity to really think out

their objectives and set them down on paper. Of course, this very brief exercise is insufficient for a project of this importance, but it is a beginning. Students should be advised to update their objectives periodically.

In repetition, one very important part of the objectives paper exercise is to cause the student to consider what additional knowledge is needed to achieve objectives and how the additional knowledge will be acquired.

Other Suggested Training Films

Another suggested training film is "What Every Manager Needs to Know About Long Range Planning."[6] The sub-title of part two of this two part film is "Invent Your Own Future." This sub-title fits in very well with the course emphasis on objectives, planning, motivation, and control.

The training film "Imagination at Work" is a very simple film with a very powerful message. It clearly demonstrates some barriers to creativity and contains advice on how to overcome these barriers. This film may be used in conjunction with an exercise to demonstrate that individual creativity can be improved. The suggested exercise begins with the request that students make a list of all rectangular shapes they can see in the classroom. When all have had ample time to complete the list, the number of rectangular shapes seen is totalled and the instructor asks how many students find ten, or twenty-five, or forty such shapes. The highest number reported is written on the blackboard and students asked to turn the list face down. At this point, attention is invited to the training film "Imagination at Work."[7] The film is shown and the highlights reviewed. The students are then asked to participate in another demonstration exercise. A large square divided into sixteen smaller squares may be drawn on the blackboard. Students are then asked to report the number of rectangles seen. Some report sixteen, some seventeen,

some thirty-two, some forty-eight. The higher totals are derived by counting two squares as a rectangle, then three squares as a rectangle, horizontally, vertically, and in combination.

Another exercise may be to ask the class at what point on earth every window in a house would have a southern exposure? The answer is the North Pole. Another exercise concerns the person who walked three miles south, turned west and walked three miles, then turned north and walked three miles, returning to the starting point. Along the way, the person saw a bear. What color was the bear? White - since the bear was a polar bear found in the north polar region.

There are numerous other stories to demonstrate the fact that some teachers encourage creativity and other teachers inhibit creativity. Another exercise is the solution to the "Nine-Dot Challenge." This exercise is reported to be a classic test of strategic thinking.[8] This exercise demands analysis, planning, and imagination. The challenge is to connect all nine dots, arranged in a square of three horizontal rows and three vertical rows, using only four straight lines, without lifting the pencil or chalk. It is reported that there are fifteen possible answers to the "Nine-Dot Challenge."

The object of all the exercises discussed is to encourage students to look at things--or situations--in other than the "usual" way.

Upon completion of these exercises, the students are asked to pick up the list of rectangles seen in the classroom and asked if they can add any more. The list usually grows by leaps and bounds as students combine square floor tile into various size rectangles, and the same for ceiling tile, then add light fixtures, blackboards, windows, pages in text books and notebooks, shapes seen in the design of articles of clothing, and so forth.

An Effective Exercise

The following exercise, useful in management courses, was taken from a management textbook, probably Certo's. The small groups of the class may be asked to list all claimant interests on a specific business organization in the community. Some claimant groups are owners, stockholders, employees, supplier, customers, community, and government agencies at various levels of government. The class may be asked to list the objectives of each claimant group. Finally, the class may be asked to determine how top managers of the specific business organization can, or may, or will accommodate the conflicting claims of the various interest groups. Other disciplines may substitute training films and exercises pertinent to that particular discipline.

Key Exercise: Force Field Analysis

This exercise is believed to be the key to the success of this particular motivational technique. Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis may be used to determine whether a desired change appears possible at a given point in time.[9] History is full of examples of good ideas that failed due to lack of preparation or lack of assessment of the resistance to the change. Resistance to change is to be expected. An important task is the determination of where the resistance is to be expected and the determination of how this resistance may be overcome through education, demonstration, and perhaps persuasion.

Lewin's exercise calls for the identification of all factors impacting on a desired change--factors that are positive and will enhance the probability of adoption or accomplishment of the desired change, and factors that are negative and will inhibit or reduce the likelihood of the adoption of the desired change. The positive factors are plotted on one side of a "line of equilibrium" (that may be drawn either horizontally or vertically--textbook

authors use each method) and shown by arrows which may have different lengths to denote different "strengths" that are subjectively assigned. The negative factors, with corresponding strengths, are plotted on the opposite side of the line of equilibrium. The present author sums the total of the positive factors and of the negative factors, and combines the two totals to give a simple "figure of merit." The figure of merit is useful in pointing out to students the amount of effort necessary (in some cases) to weaken or eliminate negative factors. The positive factors should be strengthened if possible.

Some positive factors students frequently mention are: the desire to do well, the desire to improve grade point average, the desire to learn the subject material of the course and how to apply it, the desire to show parents that the student is doing well, and the desire for self-esteem. Some negative factors mentioned frequently include: demands of jobs held, demands of family, "too much material to cover," sporting events, television programs, boy friends/girl friends, parties, and so forth. Some of these negative factors may be postponed or eliminated depending on depth of commitment to high grades.

At the completion of the force field analysis by each small group, the class may be asked to establish a percent objective of the class who will strive to make the grade of ninety or better on the examination. The percent objective is usually set higher for the final examination than the mid-term examination.

Frequently, the small groups are sufficiently interested to meet outside of class for group study. The number of such groups increase for the final examination preparation.

The present author found it very difficult to achieve a fifty percent objective of students making ninety or better on the final examination when

the instructor arbitrarily set a class goal of fifty percent. However, acting on a student suggestion that the class be allowed to set the objective, the percent achievement rose dramatically. The achievement increase was so marked that the force field analysis exercise was adopted for both the mid-term and final examinations.

Results Attained

One student observed:

"I have seen an example of the management by objectives approach right here in this classroom. You have managed us, and gotten us to manage ourselves, by helping us set our own objectives. Be encouraging us to plan a reasonable percentage of the class to score 90% or better on the tests, you have encouraged us to organize our study method, and do well. It was our decision to make the commitment. After the midterm, we could check to see if our methods of organization were working. If not, we could exercise controls to change our study habits. Very clever! Thanks for a good class."

Efforts to improve student learning as reflected by grades on examinations may progress slowly at first. This author has seen the elimination of very low grades such as twenty or thirty out of one hundred. This improvement alone makes the motivational learning technique worthwhile. The best results achieved to date were those of two undergraduate sections in a summer quarter, one section achieved ninety-one percent of the class making ninety or better on the final examination and the second section achieved ninety-six percent of the class making ninety or better on the final examination.

The author does not achieve this very high figure with every section every quarter. Sections vary in the same quarter and results by quarter vary. It can confidently be predicted that fifty percent of the students in each

undergraduate class will achieve the grade of ninety or better on the mid-term examination and that seventy percent will achieve the grade of ninety or better on the final examination.

The fun quotient of the courses has improved significantly. Please review the manifestations of fun discussed in the section on "Implementation."

The author is presently experimenting with the practice of allowing the small groups, at the completion of the force field analysis exercise, the opportunity to suggest questions for possible use on examinations. The results so far are promising. The students cover the important concepts covered in the text(s), the training films, the cases, the exercises, and other material brought into class.

For instructors interested in value development, the Morris Massey film and television tape titled "What You Are Is Where You Were When" is highly recommended.[10] Massey's discussion of why values of different age groups who grew up in different time periods are influenced by events of that time period goes far to explain why values differ. The tape is a valuable adjunct for management classes interested in organizational behavior and for other disciplines interested in values and value development.

The author invites correspondence discussing the use of similar motivational techniques, of suggestions for improving the application of the technique, or of critical comments which may be used to improve the technique.

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